



No. 37

ASHOKA

THE LIFE OF A GREAT SON OF INDIA, AS
DEPICTED IN THE PALI TEXTS

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History chronicles innumerable kings who were brave conquerors and valiant soldiers. But Ashoka stands above them all because he is the only one who at the zenith of his conquests saw the futility of violence and had the courage to renounce it. That is why, H. G. Wells in his 'Short History of The World' says that Ashoka's "reign for eight and twenty years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind." Wells goes on to say, "Such was Ashoka, the greatest of kings. He was far in advance of his age."

This volume is based on the original research of the author into Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, Commentary on Mahavamsa, and the edicts of Ashoka. Pali manuscripts and other secondary sources have also been extensively studied in gleaning facts which should kindle a new interest in Ashoka.

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ASHOKA

ASHOKA WAS THE SON OF KING BINDUSARA WHO RULED INDIA FROM HIS CAPITAL OF PATALIPUTRA IN THE THIRD CENTURY B.C. HE EXCELLED HIS BROTHERS IN THE ART OF WAR. THEREFORE, WHEN A REBELLION BROKE OUT IN THE DISTANT PROVINCE OF TAXILA, HE WAS SENT TO SUPPRESS IT.



WEEKS LATER -

YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE
HAPPY NEWS HERE. ASHOKA
HAS SUCCESSFULLY
PUT DOWN THE
REBELS.



HE SHALL RULE
THERE AS THE
VICEROY. HE
WILL KEEP
PEACE
THERE.



BINDUSARA HAD A HUNDRED SONS BESIDES ASHOKA. THEY WERE
NOT HAPPY TO HEAR THE NEWS.

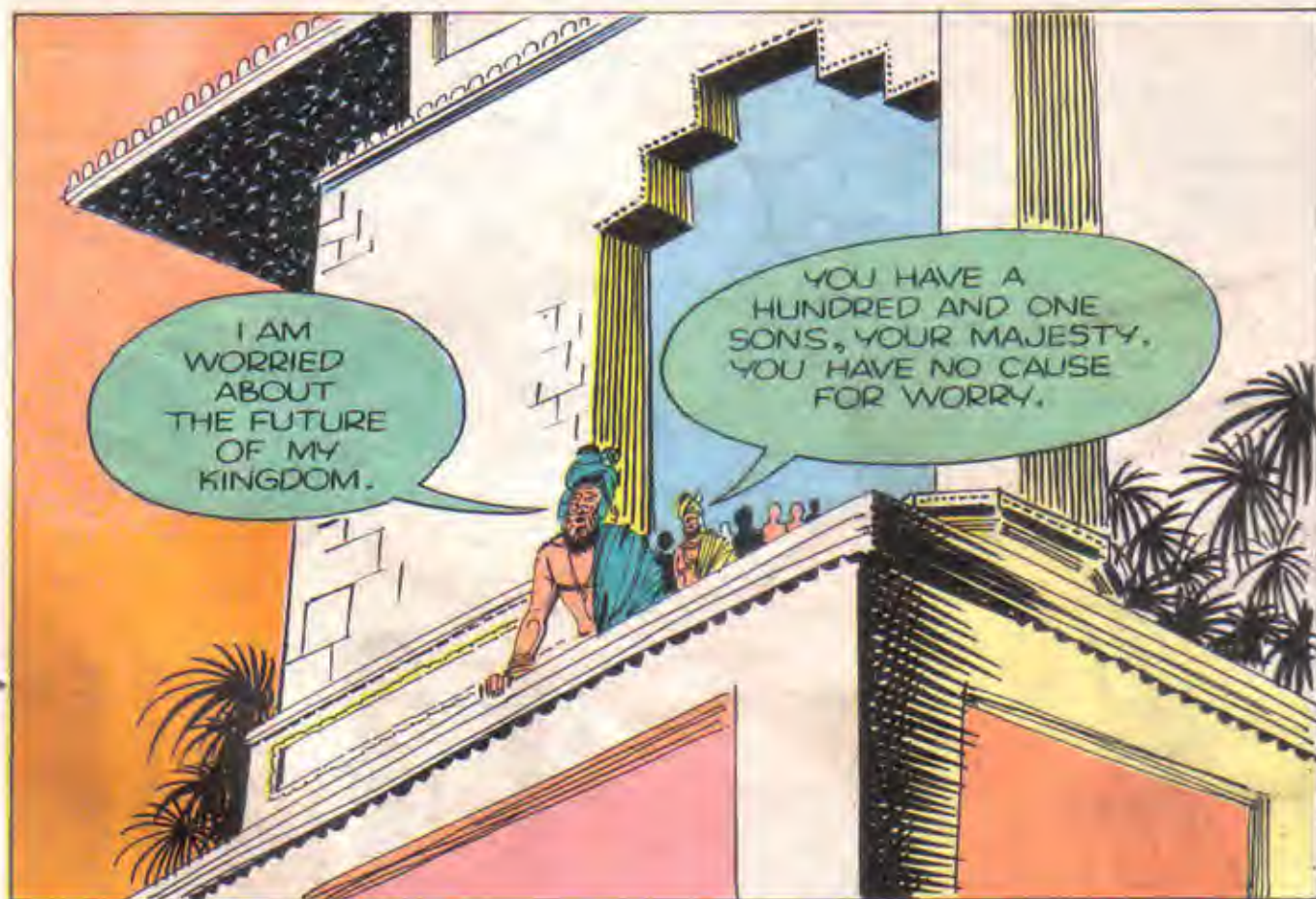
ASHOKA HAS
ALWAYS BEEN
PROUD. THE
SUCCESS WILL
GO TO HIS
HEAD.



IT WILL
MAKE HIM
MORE
ARROGANT.



BUT THEY WERE UNHAPPIER STILL, WHEN THE KING RECALLED ASHOKA FROM TAXILA.



THAT IS
EXACTLY
WHAT
WORRIES ME.
ASHOKA IS
RUTHLESS.
HE MAY
FIGHT
WITH HIS
BROTHERS
FOR THE
THRONE.



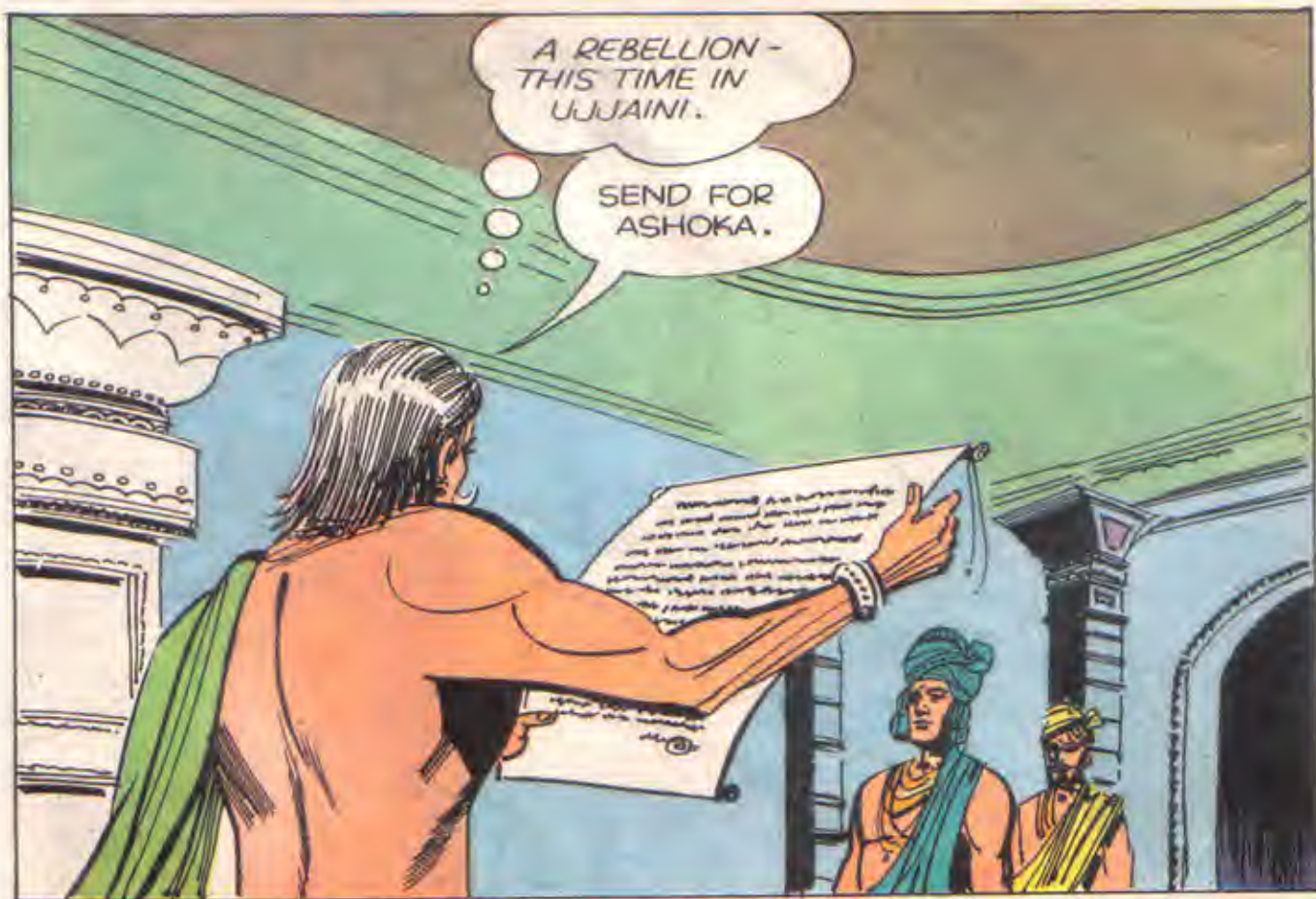
JUST THEN-

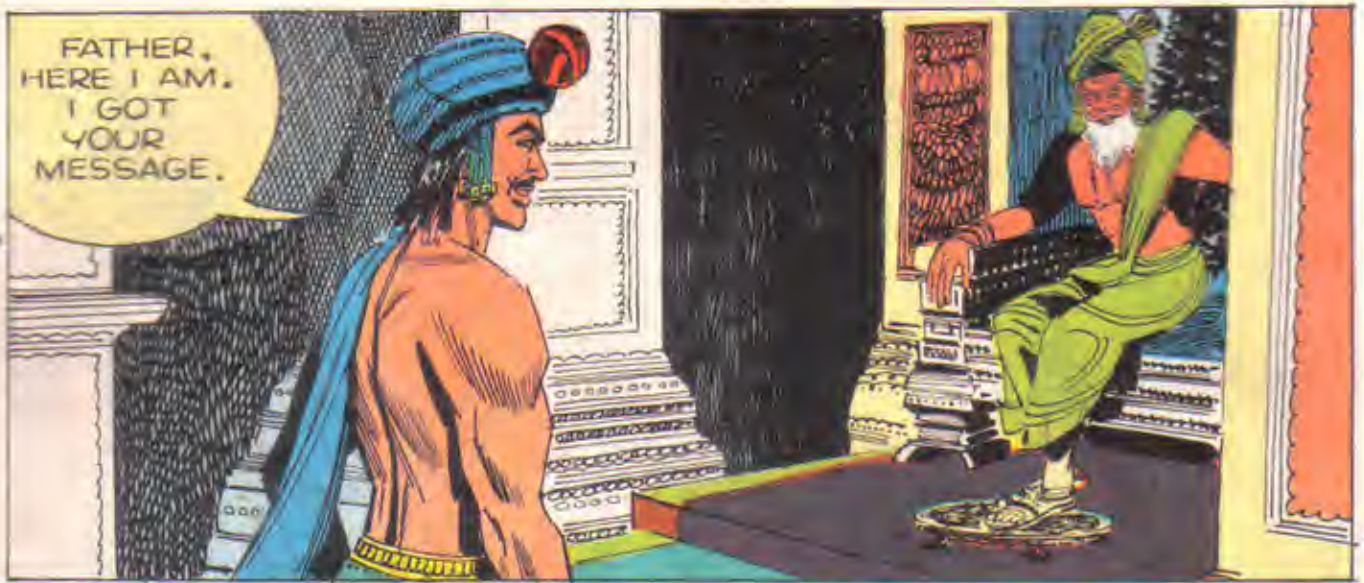
THERE
IS A
MESSENGER
FROM
UJJAINI,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



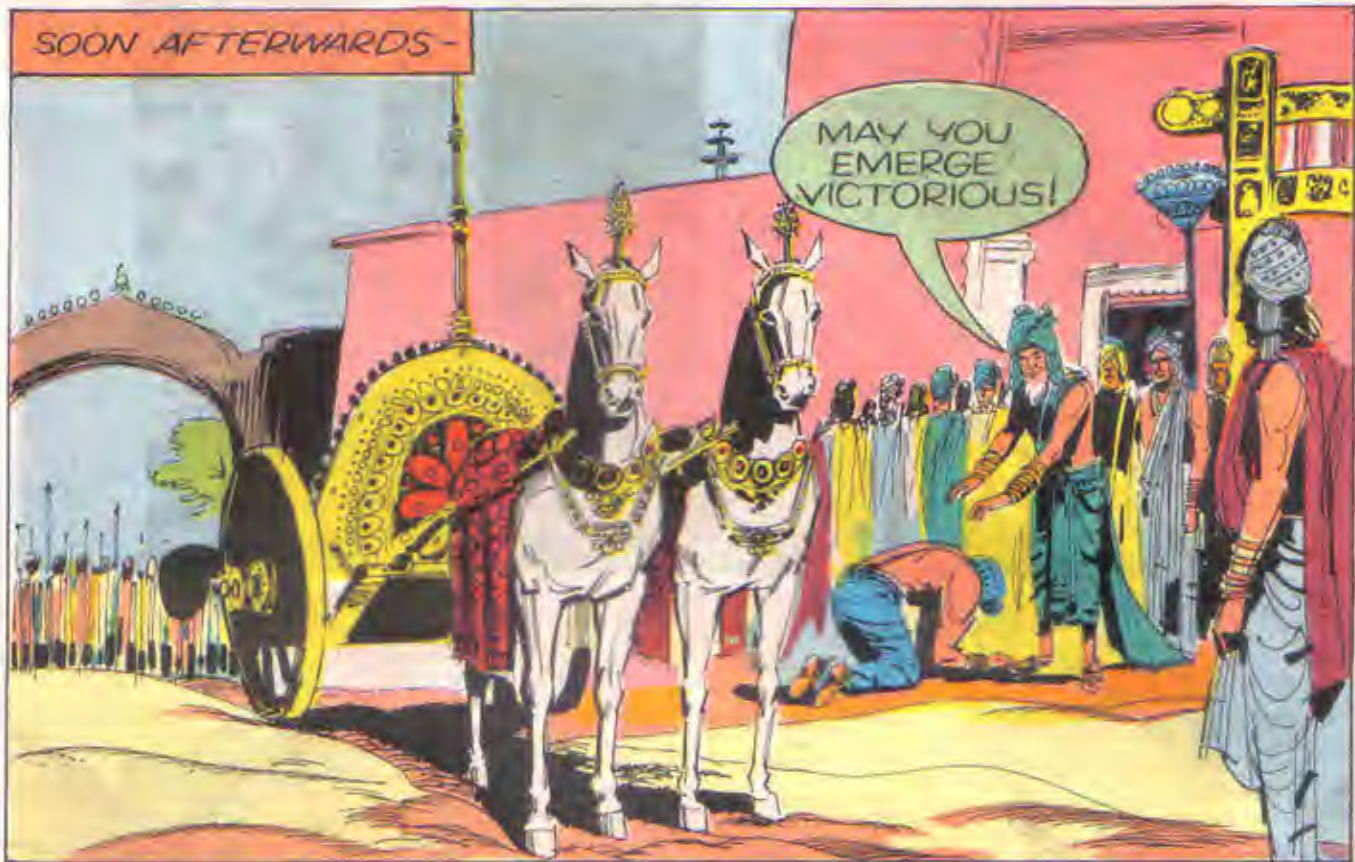
A REBELLION -
THIS TIME IN
UJJAINI.

SEND FOR
ASHOKA.

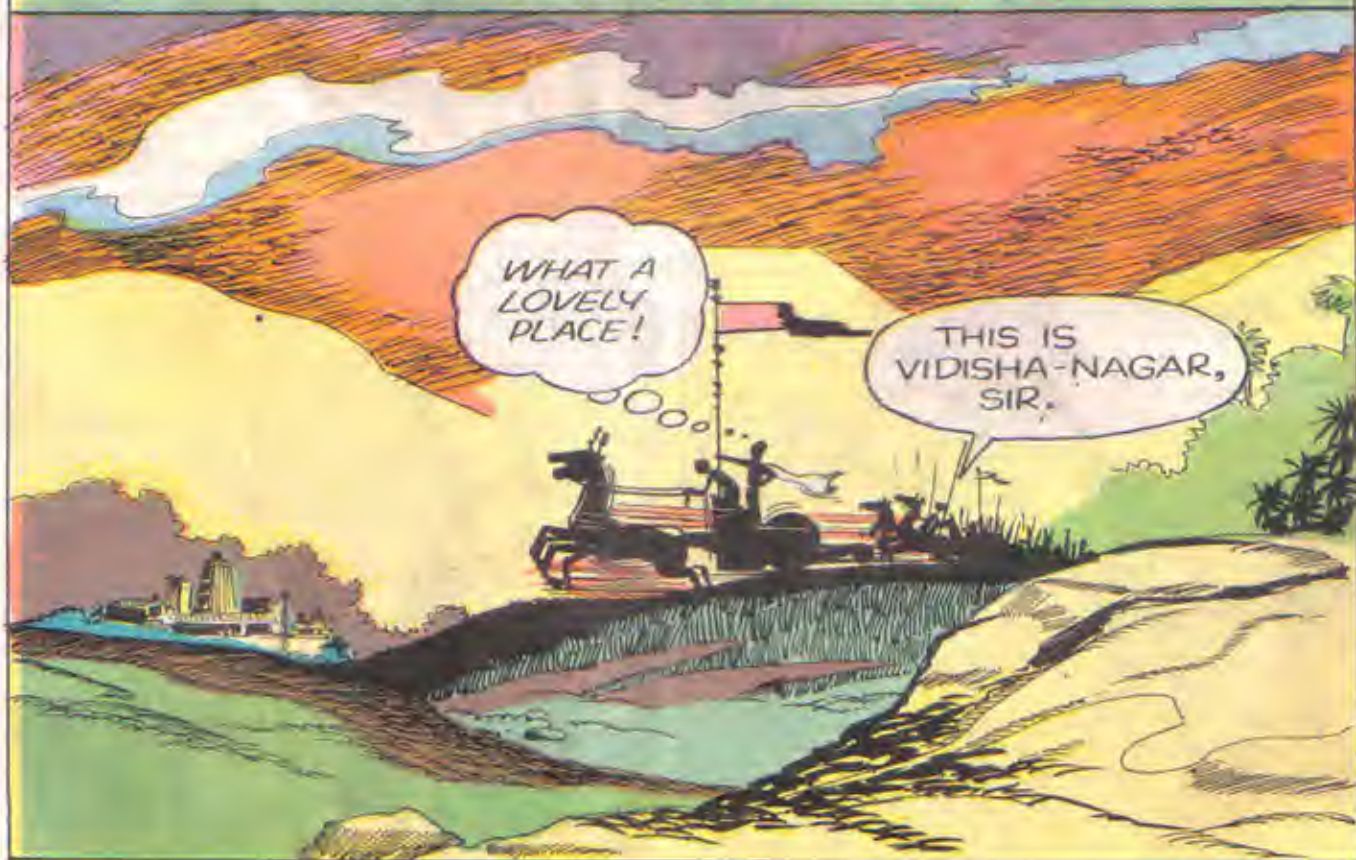




SOON AFTERWARDS -



ASHOKA MARCHED TOWARDS UJJAINI. A GREATER PART OF THE JOURNEY WAS ON HORSEBACK.





LET'S CAMP
HERE FOR
A WHILE. REST
THE HORSES.



A LITTLE LATER-

ASHOKA WAS CHARMED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE LEADER
OF THE GROUP.



EXCUSE ME, LADY.
TO WHICH TEMPLE
ARE YOU GOING?

WE ARE ON OUR
WAY TO THE CHAITYA.
NOT TO A TEMPLE.



ASHOKA'S MESSENGER SOON RETURNED.

SIR! SHE IS
THE DAUGHTER
OF A REPUTED
SHRESHTHI'S*
FAMILY.

TELL THE
SHRESHTHI!
I WANT TO
MEET HIM.

*MERCHANT

LATER-

SHRESHTHI, IF
YOU PLEASE,
I...

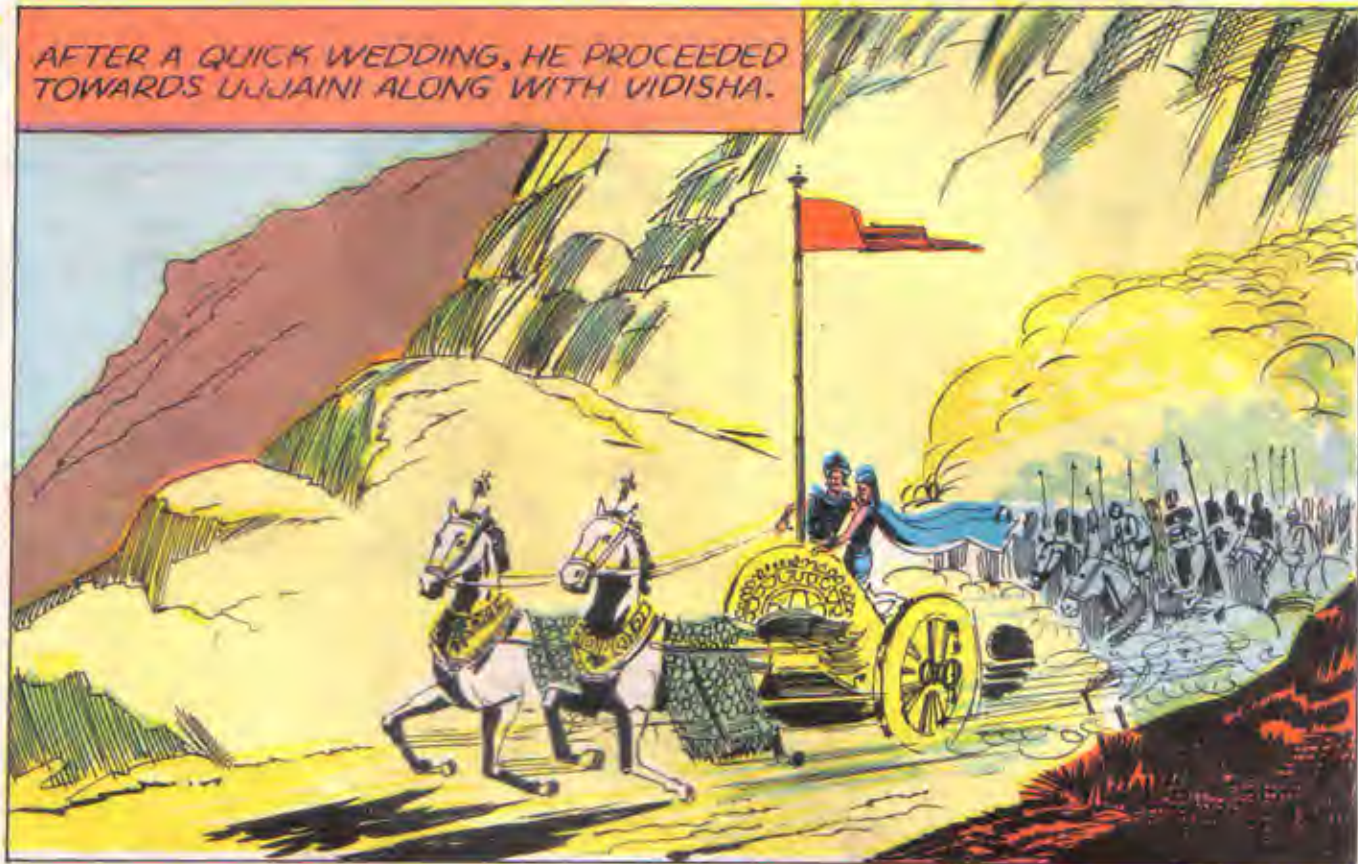
SIR,
IS THERE
ANYTHING
YOU WANT
ME TO
DO FOR
YOU?

I'VE NEVER
SEEN OUR
PRINCE
HESITATE
THUS.

I...YES, I WANT
THE HAND OF
YOUR DAUGHTER
IN MARRIAGE.

I AM
HONoured,
SIR.

AFTER A QUICK WEDDING, HE PROCEEDED
TOWARDS UJJAINI ALONG WITH VIDISHA.



ASHOKA, A GREAT WARRIOR, IN NO TIME
ROUTED THE REBELS.



THE REBELS LAID DOWN
THEIR ARMS.



PEOPLE OF THE CITY GAVE ASHOKA A GRAND WELCOME.



IN THE PALACE GARDENS LATER-





I AM A
KSHATRIYA
KING.
MY DUTY
ENJOINS
KILLING
IF NEED
BE.

WHAT ABOUT
BIMBISARA?
HE TOO WAS
A KING.
HE FOUND
PEACE IN THE
TEACHINGS
OF BUDDHA.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASHOKA AND
VIDISHA PERSISTED. MONTHS LATER, WHEN
VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON -



A SON!
I AM VERY
HAPPY.
I WILL NAME
HIM *MAHINDRA.
HE WILL CONQUER
THE ENTIRE
WORLD.

I WISH, HE
CONQUERS THE
HEARTS OF MEN
AS PRINCE
SIDDHARTHA
DID.

TWO YEARS LATER, VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.

LORD!
THIS TIME,
LET ME
CHOOSE THE
NAME.

AS
YOU
WISH.



ONE DAY, A MESSENGER CAME FROM PATALIPUTRA.

HIS MAJESTY HAS
NOT BEEN KEEPING
GOOD HEALTH. PLEASE
RETURN TO
PATALIPUTRA
IMMEDIATELY.



ASHOKA HAD HURRIED
CONSULTATIONS WITH
VIDISHA.

I HAVE RECEIVED
A MESSAGE FROM
THE CHIEF MINISTER.
MY FATHER IS ILL.
I HAVE TO RUSH TO
PATALIPUTRA...



...AND
YOU AREN'T
YET FIT TO
ACCOMPANY
ME.

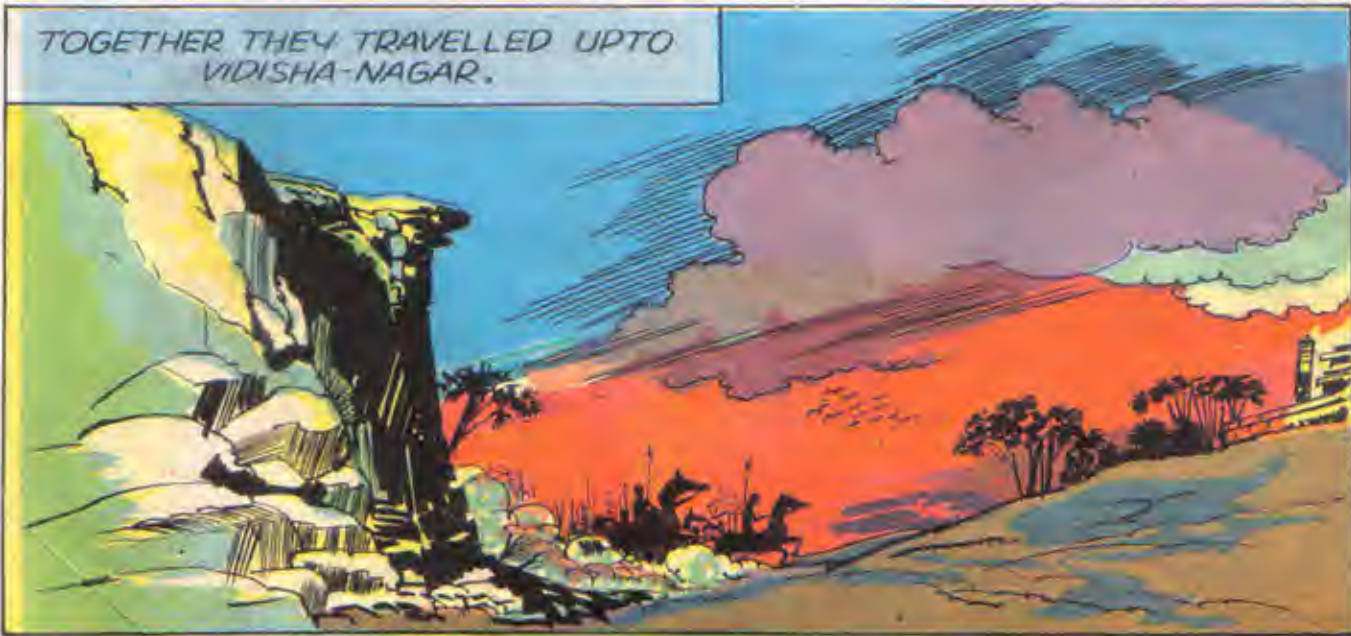


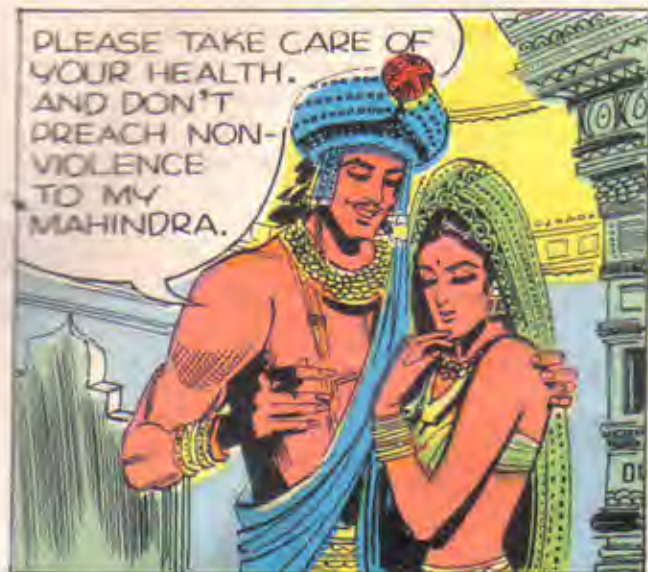
WILL YOU STAY
AT VIDISHA-NAGAR
WITH YOUR PARENTS?
I'LL SEND FOR
YOU LATER.

AS YOU
WISH,
MY LORD!



TOGETHER THEY TRAVELLED UPTO
VIDISHA-NAGAR.





AT DATALIPUTRA, ASHOKA WAS RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER.

PRINCE!
YOUR FATHER
IS NO MORE.
AND YOUR
BROTHERS ARE
FIGHTING
AMONGST
THEMSELVES
FOR THE
THRONE.

THE THRONE!
IT IS MINE!
I HAVE EARNED
THE RIGHT TO
IT.

ASHOKA FORGOT ALL ABOUT THE PROMISE
HE HAD MADE TO VIDISHA.



ASHOKA WAS RUTHLESS IN KILLING ALL THOSE THAT CHALLENGED HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE. SUMANADEVI, WIFE OF ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, WAS EXPECTING A BABY AT THE TIME.

PRINCESS!
I FEAR FOR
THE LIFE OF
THE UNBORN
CHILD.

DO YOU SUGGEST
THAT I RUN AWAY
FROM HERE?
BUT WHERE
CAN I GO?



I CAN SHOW YOU
A SECRET DOOR.
YOU CAN ESCAPE
INTO THE
WOODS.



ESCAPING FROM THE PALACE,
SUMANADEVI WANDERED IN
THE FOREST.



AN OLD MAN, WHO WAS PASSING BY,
TOOK PITY ON HER.

IF YOU COME
WITH ME TO
MY VILLAGE,
I WILL ARRANGE
FOR YOUR
STAY.

SHE ACCOMPANIED HIM, WHILE
THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY—

NO!
I CANNOT
WALK ANY
FARTHER.

DON'T WORRY,
DAUGHTER!
MY HOME IS
CLOSE BY.
I'LL FETCH MY
WIFE. YOU
REST UNDER
THIS
NIGRODHA
TREE.

IT WAS UNDER THAT NIGRODHA TREE
THAT A BOY WAS BORN TO SUMANADEVI.

LET'S
CALL HIM
NIGRODHA
KUMAR.

NIGRODHA KUMAR GREW UP
IN THAT VILLAGE AND
BECAME A MONK AT A VERY
TENDER AGE.

MEANWHILE, ASHOKA HAD BECOME A POWERFUL KING. AT HIS COURT -

YES, YOUR MAJESTY. EVEN TAXILA AND UJJAINI ARE QUIET.

MINISTER, IS MY KINGDOM PEACEFUL? ARE THE BORDERS QUIET?



STILL WE SHOULD NOT REST TILL KALINGA IS CONQUERED.

WHY YOUR MAJESTY?



IT IS INDEPENDENT TODAY AND MAY RAISE ITS HEAD ANY MOMENT.

WAR IT WILL HAVE TO BE.



COMMANDER! PREPARE FOR THE BATTLE.



ASHOKA'S
ARMY
INVADIED
KALINGA.



THE SOLDIERS OF KALINGA
FOUGHT BRAVELY.



AT LAST—

WE HAVE WON.
KALINGA IS
OURS.

I
SHALL
VISIT
KALINGA.



AS HE PROCEEDED, HE SAW HORRIBLE SIGHTS.



HEAPS OF DEAD MEN!
WE HAVE KILLED
MANY.

OVER
1,00,000
MEN TO BE
PRECISE,
YOUR
MAJESTY.



WE HAVE
CAPTURED
1,50,000
MEN,
YOUR
MAJESTY.

MERCY!
WE BEG FOR
MERCY!

AS ASHOKA MOVED FARTHER -

IT LOOKS
DESOLATE
HERE.



LAKHS HAVE
DIED, YOUR
MAJESTY.

HE SAW THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.



LET'S
RETURN.



IN THE PALACE—

YOUR
MAJESTY!
AREN'T
YOU
WELL?

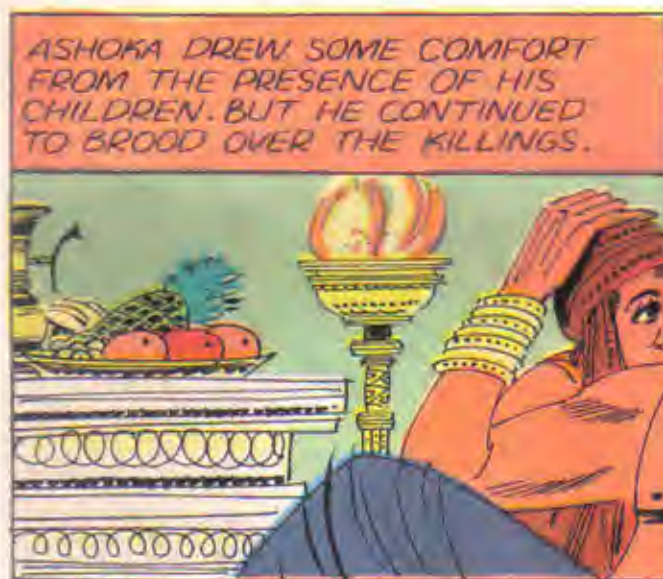
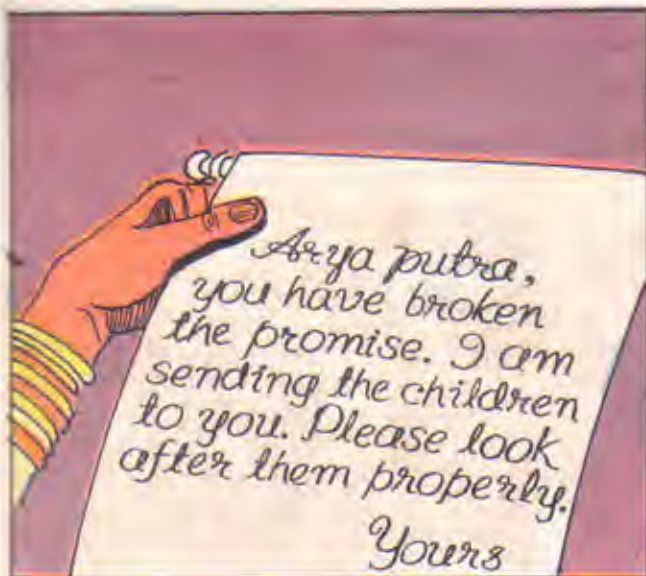
I HAVE
LOST MY
PEACE OF
MIND.

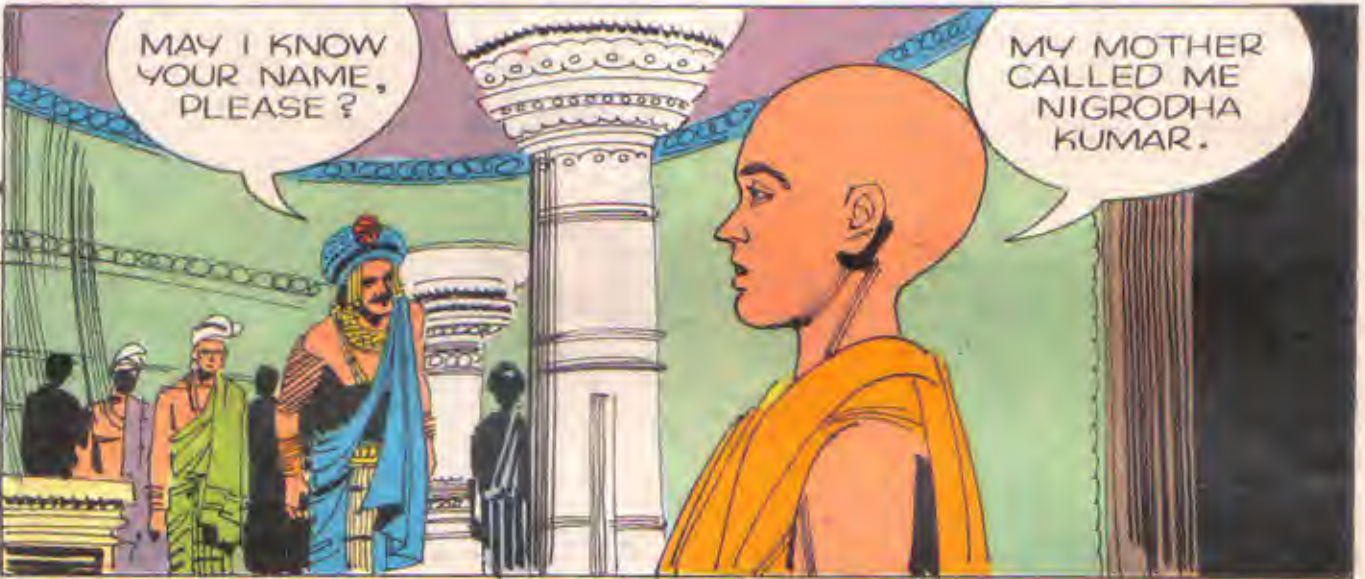
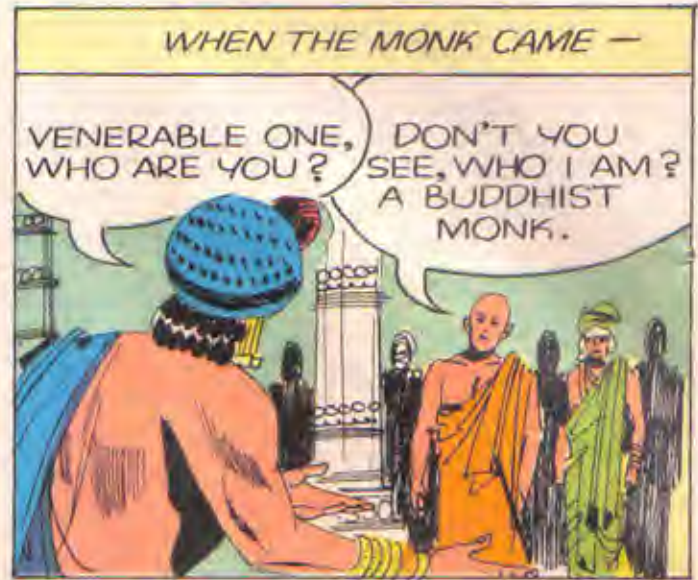


TO ADD TO HIS GRIEF
A MESSENGER CAME
FROM VIDISHA-NAGAR.

YOUR MAJESTY!
I HAVE BROUGHT
THIS LETTER FROM
VIDISHA DEVI.











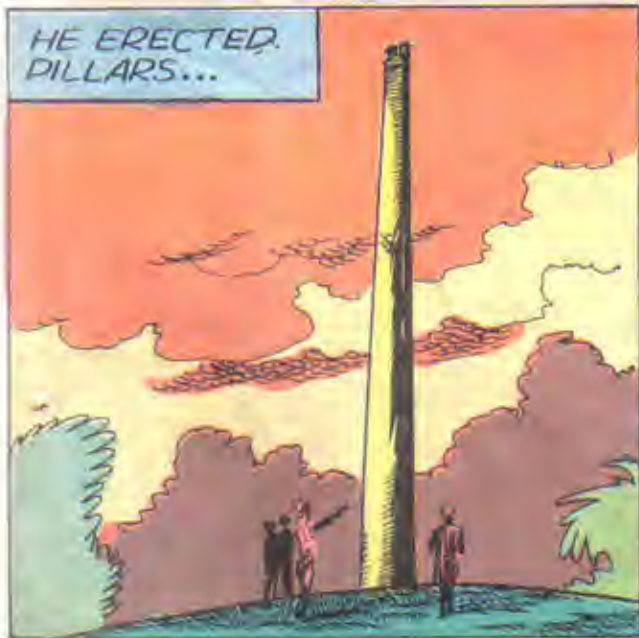
A TRANSFORMATION CAME ABOUT IN ASHOKA. ALL HIS ATTENTION NOW WAS ON BRINGING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO THE PEOPLE.



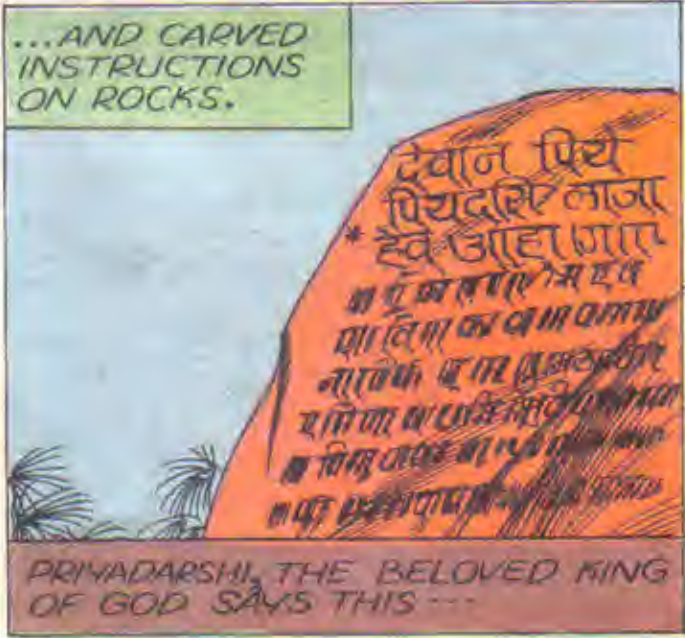
FOR THE COMFORT OF TRAVELLERS, EVEN IN THE WOODS, HE BUILT REST HOUSES AND DISPENSARIES.

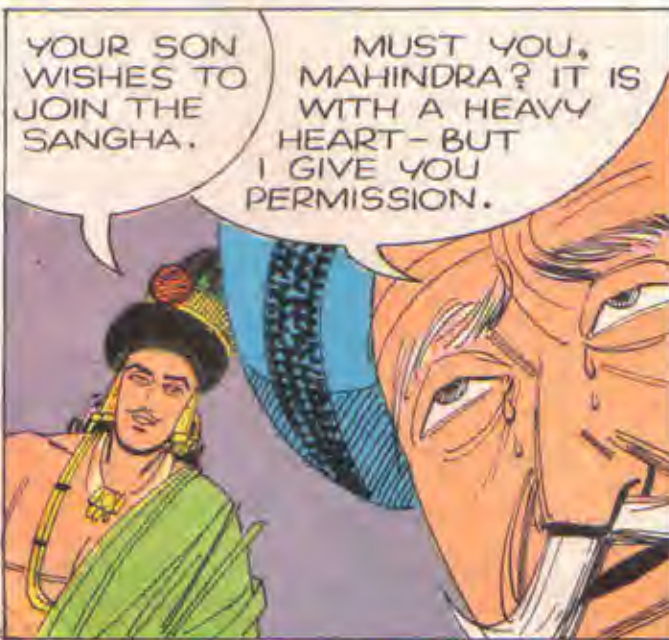


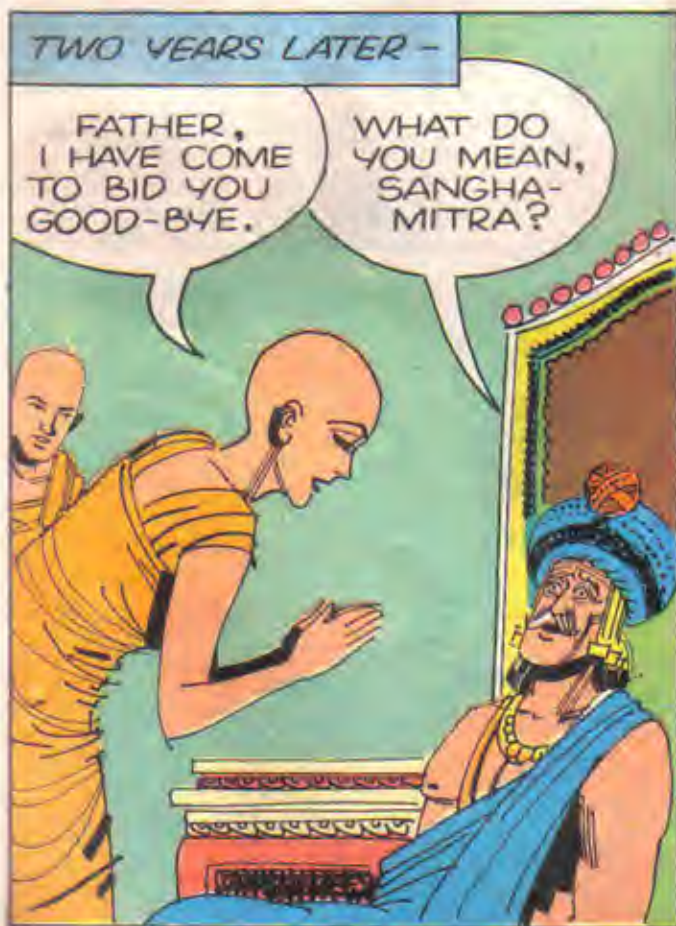
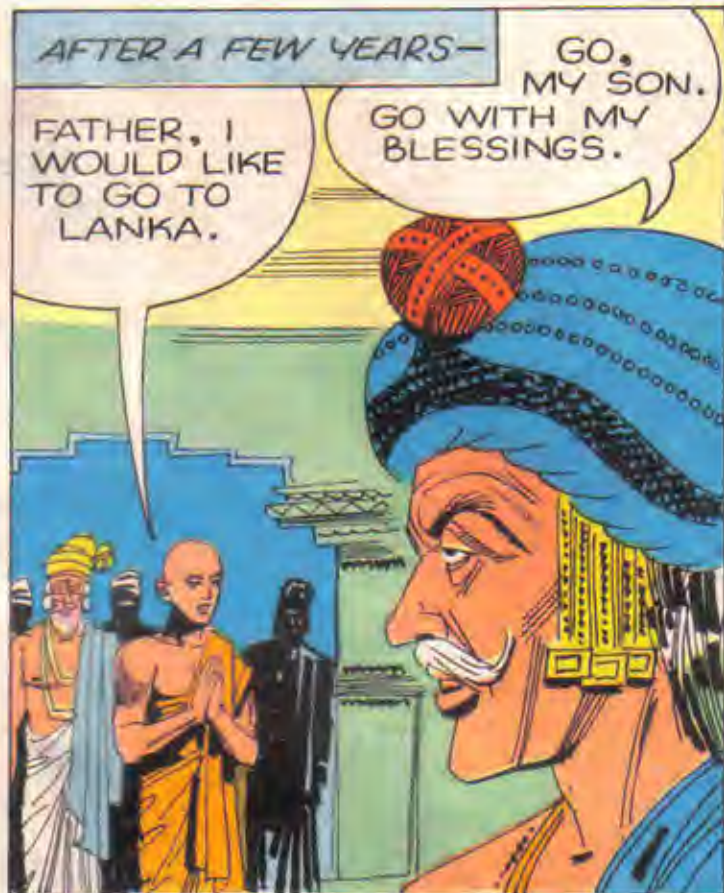
HE ERECTED PILLARS...



...AND CARVED INSTRUCTIONS ON ROCKS.











DO NOT
GRIEVE.



BY
SACRIFICING
YOUR DEAR ONES
YOU HAVE
PROVED THAT
DHARMA IS
DEAR TO YOU.
YOU ARE
INDEED,
DHARMASHOKA.

THUS ASHOKA BECAME DHARMASHOKA.
HE RULED FOR MANY YEARS AND LOOKED
AFTER THE WELFARE OF THE SUBJECTS
OF HIS VAST EMPIRE AS A FATHER
WOULD LOOK AFTER HIS CHILDREN.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF CO-EXISTENCE, WHICH HE PROPAGATED, ARE STILL RESPECTED THE WORLD OVER. THE ASHOKA PILLAR AT SARNATH REMINDS US EVEN TILL THIS DAY OF HIS GREATNESS. THE 'DHARMA CHAKRA' ON THE ASHOKA PILLAR ADORNS OUR NATIONAL FLAG.





Preservation